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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2016

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER TO GHANA

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.5 d and e.

¶11. (U) Summary: On January 24, Ambassador paid a courtesy call on British High Commissioner Gordon Wetherell. They discussed corruption in Ghana, Muslim outreach and the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. End summary.

Corruption

¶12. (C) The Ambassador expressed concerns about perception of rising corruption. Wetherell agreed with the Ambassador that there is corruption in Ghana and that some politicians are using corrupt means to get rich while they are still in power, including some officials in the Castle. However, there was no firm evidence that corruption in Ghana is increasing (in fact it appeared to be declining) or that corruption was large scale, he opined. The stir about kickbacks to the Castle which dominated the media before the ruling NPP party's recent convention was typical political "mud slinging" which quieted down after the convention. The Asantehene, the Ashanti King, told the President that he needs to do more to tackle the perception of corruption. Before Christmas, Wetherell raised the corruption issue with President Kufuor, who responded that those with evidence should come forward. The President refused to agree to a stadium deal he thought was too expensive, instead seeking out a cheaper tender from the Chinese. The President was very angry when the losing company (which had some U.S. and U.K. involvement) sought to bid on subsequent related contracts, according to Wetherell. (Note: Post reported on this deal in Accra 2619, December 30, 2005. End note.)

MuslimOutreach

¶13. (C) The British are reaching out to Ghanaian Muslims. A British man recently visited Ghana, while a visiting Member of Parliament called on the National Chief Imam during Eid. The British also fund small self-help projects, some of which go to Muslim communities. Most Ghanaian Muslims are moderate, although there are some radical elements, Wetherell said. The GOG kept track of radical Islamic preachers from abroad who come to Ghana but Wetherell wondered if they tracked Ghanaian students who returned from Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East.

GPRS

¶14. (SBU) The Ambassador noted that Senior Minister J.H. Mensah told her earlier the same day that the second Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) was completed and required no more attention. Wetherell said this was also the conclusion of donors. It did not make sense to focus so much time on the GPRS any more - the few GOG officials involved

have better ways to use their time. Ghana should adopt a rolling annual review process.

Comment

¶5. (C) This meeting was consistent with other discussions we have had with Wetherell and other British diplomats. It is clear the UK is rosy about Ghana. We are more concerned about corruption and the GPRS than our colleagues but we are working together and with similar perspectives on Muslim outreach and counterterrorism.

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